

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 BUDAPEST 3375

BELGRADE FOR CSCE DELEGATION

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINR, PINT, SCUL, SHUM, HU, US, VT
SUBJECT: VISIT OF CARDINAL KROL AND ARCHBISHOP BERNARDIN TO HUNGARY

SUMMARY: THE VISIT OF CARDINAL KROL AND ARCHBISHOP BERNARDIN
HAS BEEN A SUCCESS. THEY OFFICIATED AT THREE
LARGE AND FESTIVE EVENTS: MASSES AT ESZTERGOM AND BUDAPEST
AND A CONCERT IN HONOR OF POPE PAUL IN THE MATYAS CHURCH.
LAST EVENT WAS ATTENDED BY WIFE OF PARTY BOSS JANOS KADAR.
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IN ADDITION, VISITING PRELATES MET WITH HUNGARIAN CHURCH
LEADERS AND VISITED CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOLS, TWO THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARIES, AN ABBEY, AND VARIOUS CHURCH MONUMENTS.
THEY UNDERLINED THE UNOFFICIAL NATURE OF THEIR VISIT,
STRESSING CHURCH-TO-CHURCH TIES, AND ENHANCING THE
POSITION OF CARDINAL LEKAI, THEIR HOST, THROUGH THE
DEFERENCE AND ATTENTION THEY PAID HIM.

KROL AND BERNARDIN STUCK TO RELIGIOUS THEMES IN THEIR PUBLIC REMARKS, BUT THEIR ITINERARY FOCUSED SOME ATTENTION ON THE POSITION OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN HUNGARY.

CARDINAL LEKAI ROSE TO THE OCCASION. HE TOOK ADVANTAGE OF AMERICANS' PRESENCE TO PROMOTE THE POSITION OF THE CHURCH IN HUNGARY THROUGH BOTH HIGH VISIBILITY EVENTS AND REMARKS DESIGNED TO AFFIRM THE CHURCH'S ROLE IN HUNGARY TODAY.

CARDINAL KROL MADE IT CLEAR THAT THE VISIT WAS DESIGNED TO ASSIST LEKAI. IT DID. IT ALSO HELPED TO STRENGTHEN AMERICAN-HUNGARIAN CHURCH RELATIONS. END SUMMARY.

1. ARRIVAL. CARDINAL DROL OF PHILADELPHIA AND ARCHBISHOP BERNARDIN OF CINCINNATI, PRESIDENT OF NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS, ARRIVED SEP 21, FOR A WEEK'S VISIT. THEY WERE MET BY THE HUNGARIAN PRIMATE, CARDINAL LEKAI, TWO OFFICIALS OF STATE OFFICE OF CHURCH AFFAIRS, AND AMBASSADOR KAISER.

2. ARRIVAL REMARKS BY CARDINALS KROL AND LEKAI AND ARCHBISHOP BERNARDIN STRESSED THE RELIGIOUS NATURE OF VISIT AND THE NEED FOR AMERICAN AND HUNGARIAN CHURCH LEADERS TO GET TOGETHER. BOTH PARTIES, AS THEY WERE TO DO LATER ON SEVERAL PUBLIC OCCASIONS, BRIEFLY
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ACKNOWLEDGED HUNGARIAN GOVERNMENT "FACILITATION" OF VISIT. AS PREDICTED BY DEPARTMENT, CARDINAL KROL CLEARLY STATED THAT HE HAD BEEN GIVEN NO MANDATE BY ANYONE TO COME TO HUNGARY. CARDINAL LEKAI STATED HE HOPED VISIT WOULD STRENGTHEN U.S.-HUNGARIAN CHURCH TIES AND PROMOTE PEACE.

3. ITINERARY/EVENTS. THE FIRST EVENT ON THE ININERARY WAS A MASS AT ESZTERGOM, WHERE THE AMERICANS OFFICIATED, ATTENDED BY SOME 5,000 CATHOLICS. THE FOLLOWING DAY KROL AND BERNARDIN TOURED RELIGIOUS SITES OF CITY, INCLUDING A CATHOLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL AND THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY. LATER DURING WEEK THEY VISITED FOUR OTHER SECONDARY SCHOOLS, TWO IN BUDAPEST, ONE IN GYOR AND ONE IN SZENTENDRE. THEY ALSO VISITED CATHOLIC THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY IN BUDAPEST, A CATHOLIC ABBEY IN PANNONHALMA, AND A FEW NON-RELIGIOUS TOURIST ATTRACTIONS. THEY PAID AN OBLIGATORY CALL ON IMRE MIKLOS, CHAIRMAN OF STATE OFFICE FOR CHURCH AFFAIRS BUT HAD FORMAL MEETINGS WITH NO OTHER HUNGARIAN GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL. ASIDE FROM THE MASS AT ESZTERGOM, THERE WERE TWO OTHER LARGE, PUBLIC AND FESTIVE EVENTS -- MASS AT ST. STEPHEN'S

BASILICA AND A CONCERT IN THE MATYAS CHURCH IN
HONOR OF THE POPE.

4. SUNDAY MASS BUDAPEST. THE BELIEF THAT THE CHURCH IN
HUNGARY IS AN AFFAIR OF ELDERLY WOMEN WAS DEALT A
SEVERE BLOW ON SUNDAY, WHEN CARDINAL KROL, CARDINAL
LEKAI AND ARCHBISHOP BERNARDIN OFFICIATED AT A COM-
BINED BAPTISM AND HIGH MASS IN ST. STEPHEN'S
BASILICA. MORE THAN 50 YOUNG MARRIED COUPLES BROUGHT
THEIR BABIES TO BE BAPTIZED, AND MORE THAN 4,000
PEOPLE, YOUNG AND OLD, CROWDED INTO THE BASILICA TO
WITNESS THE IMPRESSIVE TWO-HOUR CEREMONY AND HEAR
SERMONS PREACHED BY BOTH CARDINALS.

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5. BOTH LEKAI AND KROL LARGELY CONFINED THEIR
REMARKS TO PASTORAL THEMES CONCERNING BAPTISM AND THE
DUTIES OF PARENTS IN ENSURING THAT THEIR CHILDREN
RECEIVE A RELIGIOUS EDUCATION. CARDINAL KROL'S
SERMON WAS STUDIOUSLY NON-POLITICAL. IN MENTIONING
DIFFERENCES BETWEEN HUNGARY AND THE UNITED STATES --
IN ORDER TO UNDERLINE THE UNIFYING NATURE OF THE CHURCH
-- KROL DID NOT CITE POLITICAL DIFFERENCES IN HIS LIST
WHICH INCLUDED GEOGRAPHY AND LANGUAGE. ONE REMARK
WHICH COULD HAVE A POLITICAL INTERPRETATION WAS THE

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CARDINAL'S EXHORTATION THAT THE HUNGARIAN PEOPLE'S
"FAITH STRENGTHEN, HOPE ENDURE, AND CHARITY EMBRACE
ALL PEOPLE."

6. CARDINAL KROL ALSO PAID PUBLIC TRIBUTE TO THE
FAITH OF THE HUNGARIAN PEOPLE, CALLING THEM THE
GREATEST TREASURE OF THE CHURCH IN HUNGARY. HE
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EMPHASIZED, AS HE DID ELSEWHERE, THAT HE AND ARCH-
BISHOP BERNARDIN WERE IN HUNGARY AS THE GUESTS OF
CARDINAL LEKAI, THUS UNDERLINING THE CHURCH-TO-CHURCH
NATURE OF THE VISIT.

7. CONCERT FOR POPE PAUL'S BIRTHDAY. A HIGHLY IMPRES-
SIVE RELIGIOUS CONCERT WAS HELD THE NIGHT OF SEP 26 IN
HISTORIC MATYAS CHURCH. RELIGIOUS ENTHUSIASM AND
PATRIOTISM OF THRONG IN ATTENDANCE CAME THROUGH TO
ASSEMBLED DIPLOMATIC CORPS AND ENTIRE BENCH OF HUNGARIAN
BISHOPS, ASSEMBLED FOR THE OCCASION. THE EVENING
BELONGED TO POPE PAUL, BUT LEITMOTIF OF AMERICAN-
HUNGARIAN RELIGIOUS BROTHERHOOD PERSISTED THROUGHOUT.
TWO MODERN, FORECFUL AND EMOTIVE RELIGIOUS WORKS BY HUNGARIAN
COMPOSERS
WERE SANG. THE TWO CARDINALS SPOKE AND THE EVENING WAS
CAPPED WHEN THE ENTIRE CONGREGATION STIRRINGLY SANG
THE HUNGARIAN NATIONAL ANTHEM.

8. IN ATTENDANCE, AND PUBLICLY ACKNOWLEDGED BY CARDINAL
LEKAI, WAS IMRE MIKLOS. MORE SIGNIFICANTLY, MRS. JANOS
KADAR WAS ALSO PRESENT. SINCE KADAR HIMSELF MET THE

POPE DURING HIS RECENT VISIT TO ITALY, MRS. KADAR'S PRESENCE AT CONCERT IN THE POPE'S HONOR WAS CLEARLY ACCEPTABLE. NEVERTHELESS, HER PRESENCE IN THE SHRINE OF HUNGARIAN CATHOLICISM (AND NATIONAL, ROYAL TRADITION) IS UNPRECEDENTED AS FAR AS THE EMBASSY IS AWARE, AND IS NOT WITHOUT MEANING ON THE BUDAPEST SCENE. PRESIDENT PAL LOSONCZI EARLIER IN DAY TELEGRAPHED BIRTHDAY CONGRATULATIONS TO POPE PAUL ON BEHALF OF HUNGARY'S PRESIDENTIAL COUNCIL.

9. CARDINAL LEKAI SPOLE TO THOSE ASSEMBLED FOR THE
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PAPAL CONCERT OF THE RELIGIOUS HISTORY OF MATYAS CHURCH, CITING THE SAME SORT OF PROBLEMS FACED BY THE CHURCH TODAY. HE REMARKED HOW THE POPE REIGNING IN 1444 HELPED SMOOTH OVER INTERNAL HUNGARIAN DISPUTES. HE RECALLED RINGING SPEECHES DELIVERED AGAINST THE TURKS (FOREIGN OPPRESSORS) IN MATYAS CHURCH. HE EVOKED POPE INNOCENT XI'S EFFORTS IN THE MIDDLE AGES TO BRING TOGETHER THE WARRING KINGDOMS OF EUROPE. HE WENT ON TO SAY HOW POPE PAUL, AS HAD PREVIOUS POPES, EXTENDED HIS HANDS TOWARDS THE HUNGARIAN PEOPLE. HE PRAISED HOW MUCH POPE PAUL HAD DONE TO PROMOTE PEACE AND UNDERSTANDING, SPECIFICALLY REFERRING TO THE IMPROVEMENT WHICH HAD COME ABOUT IN RELATIONS BETWEEN GOVERNMENT OF HUNGARY AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH DURING TIME POPE PAUL HAS BEEN IN OFFICE. HE CREDITED POPE WITH MAKING IT POSSIBLE THAT HUNGARIANS "COULD BE AT SAME TIME LOYAL CATHOLICS AND CONSSTRUCTIVE CITIZENS OF THE STATE." THIS LAST REMARK WAS A REFERENCE TO THE 1964 AGREEMENT BETWEEN HUNGARY AND THE VATICAN. LEKAI ALSO MADE AN OBLIQUE REFERENCE TO THE MINDSZENTY ERA WHEN HE NOTED THAT THE POPE HAD SUCCESSFULLY FILLED ALL THE BISHOPRIC SEES IN HUNGARY, INCLUDING THE POST OF PRIMATE.

10. CARDINAL KROL ALSO PRAISED THE POPE, CALLING HIM A PILGRIM POPE WHO HAD TRAVELED FAR AND WIDE IN INTEREST OF CHURCH UNITY AND PEACE. IN WHAT SEEMED TO BE A STRONG DEFENSE OF POPE'S CONTINUANCE IN OFFICE, CARDINAL KROL DESCRIBED THE PAPACY AS A CROSS WHICH COULD NOT BE PUT ASIDE. HE ALSO PRAISED STRENGTH AND VITALITY OF CATHOLIC FAITH IN HUNGARY. HE SAID HE HAD COME HERE TO PROMOTE AMERICAN-HUNGARIAN CHURCH TIES, WHICH HE HOPED COULD BE DEVELOPED FURTHER, AND TO LEARN ABOUT RELIGIOUS LIFE IN HUNGARY. THROUGHOUT HE STUCK TO STRICTLY RELIGIOUS THEMES.

11. PUBLICITY. NO WESTERN CORRESPONDENTS HAVE, TO OUR
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KNOWLEDGE, BEEN IN HUNGARY COVERING VISIT. IN HUNGARIAN MEDIA, PUBLICITY HAS BEEN CONFINED TO BRIEF ANNOUNCEMENTS. COVERAGE OF VISIT IN CHURCH PRESS WAS FULLER. CAMERAMEN WERE IN ATTENDANCE ON AT LEAST TWO OCCASIONS BUT AS YET EMBASSY KNOWS OF NO FOOTAGE BEING SHOWN ON TV. THE TWO VISITING PRELATES DID NOT GIVE A PRESS CONFERENCE, BUT LEFT STATEMENTS WITH THE CHURCH PAPER MAGYAR KURIR. IN HIS STATEMENT, KROL EXPRESSED GRATITUDE TO CARDINAL LEKAI AND TO GOH. HE NOTED HE AND ARCHBISHOP BERNARDIN HAD MET WITH A WIDE RANGE OF CATHOLICS. ARCHBISHOP BERNARDIN SAID HIS AND CARDINAL KROL'S VISIT EXPRESSED THEIR FRIENDSHIP FOR HUNGARIAN PEOPLE AND THAT AMERICAN AND HUNGARIAN CHURCH PEOPLE BELONG TOGETHER. HE ASKED HUNGARIAN CATHOLIC PEOPLE TO SHOW INTEREST IN AMERICAN PROBLEMS.

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12. ACCORDING MTI, HUNGARIAN CHURCH LEADERS VIEWED VISIT AS SUCCESS WHICH SERVED WELL GOAL OF GATHERING INFORMATION. HUNGARIAN SIDE, MTI SAID, EXPECTS VISIT TO PLAY A FAVORABLE ROLE IN AMERICAN-HUNGARIAN RELATIONS AND TO PROMOTE MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING OF GENERAL CHURCH POLICY ISSUES.

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13. COMMENT: BOTH SIDES WANTED AND SUCCEEDED IN MAKING THE VISIT A CHURCH-TO-CHURCH AFFAIR WHICH WOULD ENHANCE LEKAI'S POSITION AND THE POSITION OF THE CHURCH IN HUNGARY. CARDINAL KROL TOLD US PRIVATELY THAT HE WAS PARTICULARLY IMPRESSED WITH HIS VISITS TO CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOLS. LEKAI COMMENTED TO THE AMBASSADOR THAT WHILE CHURCH-STATE RELATIONS ARE BETTER, THERE ARE STILL SOME PROBLEMS. CLEARLY, RELIGIOUS EDUCATION WILL BE AN AREA ON WHICH HE WILL INCREASINGLY FOCUS.

LEKAI'S PUBLIC REMARKS AND HIS ARRANGEMENT FOR THE VISIT WERE NOTALBE. LEKAI PUSHED THE CHURCH TO THE FOREFRONT ABOUT AS FAR AS THE GOH COULD PERMIT. THE ATTITUDE OF HUNGARY'S NEIGHBORS WOULD PERMIT NOTHING FURTHER ACCORDING TO THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR. AT THE SAME TIME, LEKAI BASED HIS WHOLE APPROACH ON THE BELIEF THAT IT IS POSSIBLE FOR A HUNGARIAN TO SERVE LOYALLY BOTH THE CHURCH AND THE STATE.

LEKAI'S SENSE OF SHOWMANSHIP SHOULD ALSO BE NOTED. CATHOLIC CEREMONY CONTAINS GREAT POTENTIAL FOR IT AND LEKAI USED IT TO GOOD ADVANTAGE BOTH AT ST.STEPHEN'S AND IN THE MATYAS CHURCH.

IT IS TEMPTING TO COMPARE THIS VISIT WITH THAT OF BILLY GRAHAM, THE OTHER RECENT PREMIER EVENT IN U.S.-HUNGARIAN RELIGIOUS TIES. GRAHAM'S VISIT MADE A LARGE IMPRESSION IN THE WEST AND LOOKED BEYOND HUNGARY. THE MORE EXCLUSIVE FOCUS OF THE CATHOLICS' VISIT WAS HUNGARY. AS ONE SEASONED POLITICAL OBSERVER REMARKED TO US, " OF THE SIX MILLION NOMINAL CATHOLICS IN HUNGARY, TWO MILLION ARE PRACTICING CATHOLICS, WHICH IS THREE TIMES THE NUMBER OF PARTY MEMBERS, A FACT OF WHICH THE BISHOPS ARE VERY AEARE."

ON THE ONE HAND, BILLY GRAHAM IS A CHARISMATIC

RELIGIOUS LEADER. KROL AND BERNARDIN ARE MUCH LESS SO.
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GRAHAM WORKED WITH A SMALL CHURCH IN HUNGARY; KROL AND BERNARDIN WITH THE LARGEST. GRAHAM USED HIS CONTACTS WITH THE REGIME TO FURTHER HIS MISSION; KROL AND BERNARDIN IGNORED THE REGIME TO THE EXTEND POSSIBLE.

BOTH VISIT SERVED U.S.- HUNGARIAN RELATIONS. THEY ALSO SERVED TO POLISH THE HUNGARIAN IMAGE BEFORE BELGRADE. MORE IMPORTANTLY, THEY SERVED TO PROMOTE THE POSITION OF THE CHURCHES, CATHOLIC AND PROTESTANT, IN HUNGARY.

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